

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL DISTRICT COMMISSION
INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP OF THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2006

Present: Chairman Jay Gregory, John Pesce, John Lynch, Stephen Coutu, Terrance Gray, Jeanne Boyle, Laura McNamara, Jacob Harpootian, and Heidi Green.

1. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Jay Gregory called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He announced that the representatives from GeoNova were going to introduce their proposal. The DRC would then ask questions and the representatives of GeoNova would answer those questions. After which the public would be afforded the opportunity to ask questions which would be recorded.

2. New Business

**a. Introductory Workshop for East Pointe Development
(GeoNova Development Co. LLC)**

Attorney Christine Engustian represents GeoNova. She provided a description of the property which includes four parcels that comprise approximately 29 acres. She indicated that the upland area consists of 8.5 acres and abuts Roger Williams and Bourne Avenues. Additionally, 20 acres of the property are sited along the Seekonk River. This site was formerly the Washburn Wire/Ocean Steel business. There has been environmental remediation of the site. GeoNova is a party to a Remediation Agreement with the City. They have received an Interim Letter of Compliance.

GeoNova proposes 495 residential units consisting of townhouses, condominiums and lofts. The proposal also includes 49,800 square feet of office space and 33,250 square feet of retail/restaurant space. Attorney Engustian further stated that there will be pedestrian walkways and open space which will comprise 25% of the uplands area and 20% of the waterfront parcels. She indicated that this exceeds the Waterfront regulations that require 5% open space. GeoNova plans to develop 144 units within six buildings with open space along the Omega Pond. The waterfront parcel will contain a mix of uses with residential units, retail and office space, a restaurant and pedestrian gathering places. The construction is slated to take place in four phases beginning in 2007 with the uplands area and concluding in 2012.

Attorney Engustian pointed out that there are two Environmental Land Use Restrictions (ELUR) depicted on the plans. However, there has been a third ELUR identified and the revised plans reflecting the third ELUR will be submitted as a supplement to the City and DEM.

Attorney Engustian introduced Mary Voce, Vice President of the GeoNova Development Company, LLC; William Donohoe, Planner of Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut & Kuhn; George Gifford, Landscape Architect and Eric Offenbergl, President of Northeast Engineers & Consultants.

Mr. Donohoe introduced himself as a planner and indicated that the rest of his firm is comprised of architects. He has been involved with the East Pointe project since 2002. Pursuant to the design principles set forth in the zoning ordinance and meetings held with the Planning Department, the development is urban mixed use. There will be a variety of residential uses and new jobs created by the offices, retail spaces and restaurant. They also want to promote water recreation by way of fishing and boating. Pedestrian movement is emphasized throughout the site. Cars will have access and parking will be provided for visitors and residents. In response to the feedback from neighbors, the residences along Roger Williams Avenue and Bourne Avenue will consist of single family and two family residences. The residential units abutting Phillipsdale will have more height. The lofts will consist of 6-7 floors. The heights of the buildings will be progressively less as you move closer to the water.

The public will have access to Omega Pond and the Seekonk River. The main entry to the development will be in the upland area. The primary access to the waterfront area will be via Bourne Avenue. The applicant has suggested that it will build a portion of Waterfront Drive to provide access into the East Pointe development. They are also focused on preserving views and establishing new views. Mr. Donohoe indicated that they wanted to create a town square as a gathering place for special occasions. Across the street would be the commercial, retail and office space. The parking requirement pursuant to the zoning ordinance is 1,170 spaces and GeoNova has provided 1,320 spaces within parking structures and on street parking.

Next George Gifford, the landscape architect outlined the four landscape elements of the plan that created a pedestrian orientation. The first element is the layout of the project with integration of gathering places including the park at Omega Pond, the linear public access along the waterfront, the public square and village green. The second element is the urban emphasis of the tree canopy. The third element is sidewalks are placed on both sides of the roads. The fourth element is the lighting scheme. They have selected two types of pedestrian scaled light poles. Mr. Gifford described the bollards that would be placed along the waterfront walkway which allow illumination of the walkway but would be in keeping with dark skies guidelines. Additionally, it would not impact the nearby development.

Eric Offenbergl of Northeast Engineering was the next presenter. He informed the Commissioners that the plans would be amended to add one more ELUR to the plans. The third ELUR is near the uplands area. The only impact is the relocation of the detention basins that were depicted in the plans in the upland area. Mr. Offenbergl

requested that the Commissioners permit him to submit the revised sheet as an addendum to the original application submission.

Mr. Offenberg indicated that the primary entrance into the development would be from Roger Williams Avenue. The secondary entrance would be from Bourne Avenue. Mr. Offenberg said that they would construct a portion of Waterfront Drive that would provide access to the development. For the proposed Main Street within the development, they propose wider streets with on street parking. The other streets would be narrower with sidewalks.

Mr. Offenberg described the current stormwater patterns of the site. He indicated that when Ocean Steel was sited at this location there were no buffers or stormwater management. Hence stormwater was directed naturally to Omega Pond and Seekonk River. Mr. Offenberg proposes to capture the runoff and to treat it via cascading basins. They intend on treating stormwater from parking lots and incorporating more landscaping in accordance with CRMC's new Urban Coastal Greenway policy. Mr. Offenberg indicated that they propose to install new piping that carries the discharge from Roger Williams Avenue. However, they do not intend to treat the water prior to it discharging because it is such a large volume of water.

The stormwater management plan for the East Pointe development includes "wet basins" to capture runoff from the development. There will be two water quality basins which will be sited near the restaurant and high end homes. These will be focal points in the development and as such they will be considered an amenity and will be maintained.

Mr. Offenberg indicated that the sewage upgrades will include two new pump stations to connect to the existing line. There will also be a pump station in the upland area that will connect to a manhole on Roger Williams Avenue. The waterfront portion of the site will include two separate connections. There will be a master meter as well as individual metering. He indicated that he just received the CDM report that was done for the City of East Providence which discusses water pressure issues as well as water availability. He will review the report and determine how this will affect the East Pointe development.

He discussed the phasing of the project. The first phase will entail the upland area where 144 units are planned. They are hoping to begin this phase by the end of 2006/beginning of 2007. This phase will also include realigning the railroad lines. Additionally, there are plans to raise the site approximately 7'-9' above the floodplain. GeoNova has obtained a permit from FEMA to do so. The second phase will include the 50,000 square feet of commercial area (retail and restaurant) which will take place in 2008. The third phase will consist of 151 residential units and retail which will be built from 2008-2010. The last phase entails the residential units along the water which will occur 2010-2012. They are hoping the entire project will be completed in 2012.

Mr. Offenberg described the traffic study that was performed. He informed the Commissioners that the additional traffic generated by the development would be

mitigated by road improvements. To accommodate the road improvements, the buildings on the plans were moved to provide turn lanes. He insisted that the entrances and exits to and from the development will maintain a proper level of service.

Mary Voce is one of the Principals of GeoNova. She informed the Commission that GeoNova has offered to provide 5% affordable units rather than the required 10%. She provided the following reasons as to why they could not provide the 10% affordable units:

- The land was expensive to remediate.
- They intend to move the railroad tracks to accommodate the development.
- They are raising the land out of the floodplain.
- The buildings will be placed on pilings.
- The commercial development will be subsidized by the residential development.
- GeoNova is planning to spend a lot of money on landscaping and waterfront amenities.

At this point Chairman Gregory asked for questions from the DRC to the GeoNova team. Director Boyle asked Mr. Offenbergh what the source of the fill would be to surcharge the site. Mr. Offenbergh indicated that it would be obtained from the excavation of the upland area during Phase I as well as clean fill which they will work with DEM to test prior to filling the site.

Chairman Gregory asked Mr. Donohoe whether the proposed Omega Drive would be open to the public and whether there would be adequate parking. Mr. Donohoe indicated that there would be approximately 8-10 parking spaces on Omega Drive as well as on street parking. In the uplands area there would be approximately 100 additional spaces. Chairman Gregory asked Mr. Donohoe to confirm that according to the regulations 1,170 parking spaces are required however GeoNova was going to provide 1,320 parking spaces. Mr. Donohoe confirmed.

Mr. Coutu asked what type of frame construction the townhouses in Phase I would consist of. Mr. Donohoe stated that the frame would be constructed of hardy plank. The finish would be similar to the existing Rumford neighborhood. Mr. Coutu asked if the townhouses would be sprinklered. Mr. Donohoe stated that it could be done. Mr. Coutu commented that the stormwater controls and greenspace appeared to overlap in the plans. He inquired how much of the greenspace was going to be utilized. Mr. Gifford indicated that there was great attention given to grating. There will be emergent plants planted at the bottom of the basins to assist in removing pollutants and accumulated sediments. He stated that they intended to set up a meeting with CRMC in a few weeks.

Mr. Coutu inquired who was going to be assigned to maintain the roads and stormwater controls. Mr. Offenbergh indicated that there would be a Master Association and Sub Associations who would take care of the maintenance of the roads, utilities and trash removal. Mr. Coutu indicated that the water volume and pressure are going to be

challenging for the site and he would be happy to go over the storm water and public works issues with Mr. Offenberg.

Mr. Gray asked Mr. Gifford if the landscaping plans including the tree canopy conflicted with the land use restrictions because trees are not supposed to be planted in remediation sites. Mr. Gifford indicated that the trees would be planted in membrane or fabric in compliance with the land use restrictions. Mr. Gifford further indicated that the plans do not specify species because he wants to wait until they meet with CRMC. He knows that they will not select species with long tap roots in accordance with the land use restrictions. They will be putting 7-9' fill over the area.

Director Boyle asked Mr. Gifford about whether he had looked at CRMC's Urban Coastal Greenways policy in relation to the proposed river walk. Mr. Gifford indicated that they had to look at the site as a whole. He indicated that the site does not allow for a vegetated buffer along the waterfront. They want CRMC to look at the site as a whole and to compare it to predevelopment. He stated that the walkway has aesthetic value and will address the setback requirements with CRMC by negotiating with the increased greenspace and vegetation. He noted that it is a vast improvement to what it is now. Mr. Gifford stated that along Omega Pond, they plan to revegetate with native species and create a habitat zone along the water's edge for the passage of animals but install biological barriers to guard against Canadian Geese.

Chairman Gregory asked Mr. Offenberg about the treatment of the stormwater from Roger Williams Avenue. Mr. Offenberg indicated that there is not enough room for a basin to treat the runoff. Chairman Gregory further asked Mr. Offenberg to explain the nature of a water quality basin. Mr. Offenberg explained that detention basins remove pollutants by three methods 1) settling-sediments are stored in the basin 2) pollutants settle out the more time that they are in the detention pond 3) nutrient uptake by vegetation in the detention pond.

Mr. Lynch indicated that he was interested in seeing study results for traffic outside the immediate project area. Once that has been performed, he would like to see accommodations made on the GeoNova site. Mr. Lynch indicated that he was unhappy that they were only offering 5% affordable housing. Ms. Voce indicated that the development required some financial balancing. She stated that they were going to retain a financial consultant to refine the numbers and determine what the projected sales may be. Mr. Lynch stated that the affordable units should not be the first item to be cut from the budget.

Mr. Gregory asked the applicant's engineer how the traffic at Wilson Avenue is going to be impacted by the GeoNova development. Mr. Coutu expressed his concerns about the high tension wires. He has design concerns about the setback requirements about the proximity of the driveway, detention ponds and Building F to the high tension wires. Mr. Offenberg indicated that the third ELUR was designated because of the high tension wires.

Chairman Gregory invited the public to ask questions. Mr. Justin Amoah of the *Providence Journal* asked if the railroad was still active. Ms. Voce indicated that there is one train per day that travels from the Warren Avenue area. Mr. Amoah asked what the plans were for the marina. Ms. Voce indicated that it was a future application.

Chairman Gregory thanked GeoNova and their team for their presentation. Chairman Gregory asked Mr. Offenbergl if the plans could be made available electronically. Mr. Offenbergl said he would make the arrangements with Director Boyle for the Commissioners to access electronic versions of the plans.

Chairman Gregory asked for a Motion to close the meeting. Mr. Lynch made a motion to conclude the meeting, seconded by Mr. Pesce.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne M. Boyle
Executive Director

JMB/hjg